

DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Washington, D.C. 20520

January 17, 1979

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Mr. F. Allen Harris
Political Officer
Embassy of the United States
Buenos Aires, Argentina

Dear Tex:

ARGENTINA PROJECT (S200000044)

U.S. DEPT. OF STATE, A/RPS/IPS

Margaret P. Grafeld, Director

☒ Release ☐ Excise ☐ Deny

Exemption(s):

Declassify: ☐ In Part ☒ In Full

☐ Classify as ☐ Extend as ☐ Downgrade to

Date _____ Declassify on _____ Reason _____

I appreciated your letter of December 13 concerning the stories appearing in the Washington Post and the AFL-CIO news bulletin about the detention and torture of an Argentine citizen.

When you sent that harrowing and heart-rending testimony to me at the request of the individual concerned, we seriously addressed the wish expressed in the Postscript "that the information in the report -- sanitized to disguise the source -- would be widely circulated to international organizations, human rights groups, and to interested governments."

A version was prepared in accordance with this request and circulated to a responsible and select list of private organizations, including two unions, with the proviso that the source of information would remain confidential. In addition, the name of the individual was not revealed. The sanitized version also was circulated to officials in the Department as requested. It was not sent to foreign governments, international organizations or the press.

We tried very hard to disguise the identity of the individual while at the same time releasing information that would provide "the raw material for making strong and factual reports about the situation in Argentina." The Postscript noted that the individual "had no fears for his personal safety as the government had done everything to him that it could except kill him. But, he emphasized, he was concerned about his wife and family who are the ones at risk." As your letter confirmed, "the individual related his experiences to a number of people immediately after his release," despite the risks entailed.

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The AFL-CIO and Freedom House published the sanitized version made available to them. The Washington Post story of October 29 was datelined Buenos Aires. I understand that a representative of the AAAS visiting Buenos Aires made the text available to the Washington Post representative there advising him to check with you and Mr. Mignone prior to filing the story.

You're right; in the future any material we draw upon should be cleared with you to avoid any possible references that could make the person's identity more evident.

With regard to this particular case, I was pleased to read in BA 0066 that the individual was removed from PEN detention and that round-the-clock guards most likely would be removed from his home. Please keep me up-to-date and informed about his security and status and let me know whether any repercussions occur as a result of his making known his experiences.

Thanks for your good wishes upon my marriage. My very best wishes to you, as well as my support and admiration for the important and painstaking efforts you are undertaking on behalf of human rights. You are doing such a fine job under such difficult circumstances.

Best,



Patricia M. Derian
Assistant Secretary for
Human Rights and
Humanitarian Affairs

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